

*Cecily. [Drawing back]* A moment, Ernest!

May I ask you—

are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

*Algernon. [Looking round.]* To what young lady? Good

heavens! Gwendolen!

*Cecily.* Yes! to good heavens, Gwendolen, I mean to Gwendolen.

*Algernon. [Laughing.]* Of course not! What could have put

such an idea into your pretty little head?

*Cecily.* Thank you. *[Presenting her cheek to be kissed.]* You

may. *[Algernon kisses her.]*

*Gwendolen.* I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew.

The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin,

Mr. Algernon Moncrieff.

*Cecily. [Breaking away from Algernon.]* Algernon Moncrieff! Oh!

*[The two girls move towards each other and put their arms*

*round each other's waists as if for protection.]*

*Cecily.* Are you called Algernon?

*Algernon.* I cannot deny it.

*Cecily.* Oh!

*Gwendolen.* Is your name really John?

*Jack. [Standing rather proudly!]* I could deny it if I liked.

I could deny anything if I liked. But my

name certainly

is John. It has been John for years.

*Cecily. [To Gwendolen.]* A gross deception has been practised

on both of us.

*Gwendolen.* My poor wounded Cecily!

*Cecily.* My sweet wronged Gwendolen!

*Gwendolen. [Slowly and seriously]* You will call me sister, will you not?

*[They embrace. Jack and Algernon groan and walk up and down.]*

*Cecily. [Rather brightly.]* There is just one question I would

like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

*Gwendolen.* An admirable ideal Mr. Worthing, there is just

one question I would like to be permitted to put to you.

Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be

married to your brother Ernest, so it is a

matter of some

importance to us to know where your

brother Ernest is

at present.

*Jack. [Slowly and hesitatingly.]* Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very

painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the

first time in my life that I have ever been

reduced to such a

painful position, and I am really quite

inexperienced in doing

anything of the kind. However, I will tell you quite frankly